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## *Security and Justice Projects Helping Secure Iraq*

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**BAGHDAD, Iraq** — Thirty two court facilities are complete as well as 93 fire stations with still more security and justice projects anticipated to come on line soon, according to officials with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Gulf Region Division (GRD). Correctional facilities, training academies, witness protection facilities and secure document storage sites are on the way also.

These 'brick and mortar' projects as well as their impact on the Iraqi people were the discussion topic at a recent Iraqi media roundtable press conference featuring Government of Iraq (GoI) and U.S. government security and justice subject matter experts. Biweekly media engagements feature subject matter experts from the U.S. Embassy, GRD and other entities responsible for helping rebuild Iraq's antiquated infrastructure.

"You can construct lots of buildings and structures but at the end of the day what truly is the significant impact on the Iraqi people?" asked U.S. Navy Cdr. Johnny Wolfe, GRD Security and Justice (S&J) Sub Sector Lead. "Well, in our fire station program, for instance, we have completed 93 of 95 new construction and rehabilitation projects. These fire stations are serving communities across Iraq and directly impacting 22.8 million people."

During Saddam Hussein's former regime, little attention nor financial investment was given to infrastructure maintenance

or repair. According to long-time Iraqi firefighters, civil defense and fire fighting were among the lowest of the low priority government jobs. In the 'pecking order' of civil servants, firefighters ranked below street sweepers.

Early World Bank estimates revealed it would take nearly \$60 billion to rehabilitate Iraq's antiquated infrastructure – newer figures indicate the cost may be more than \$100 billion. In GRD's Facilities Sector, alone, World Bank estimates Iraq's need at \$11.7 billion with the U.S. tax payer contribution being \$3.55 billion.

"Specifically, the S&J program includes 273 Iraq Relief Reconstruction Fund (IRRF) projects costing \$506.1 million with the goal of each to further establish the rule of law and provide security to Iraq," said Wolfe. "Two hundred and fifty seven projects are complete and 16 are in progress. The last S&J project, the Hillah Courthouse, is scheduled for completion in August 2008."

Training academies are an essential component of GRD's security and justice program. According to Wolfe, GRD built four training centers that are complete, operational and being administered by GoI.

"Under Saddam, very little money was spent on training, fire training equipment, personal protection equipment or facility repair/upgrades," said Wolfe.

In June, GRD completed Iraq's new \$3.5 million Iraq Fire Training Academy in the Karkh district of Baghdad. Lodging accommodates 50 cadets and 12 instructors. Office space, bathrooms and kitchen/dining areas can support at total of 100 people. The facility has several classrooms, a fire-fighting training tower and hose training area with storage facilities to accommodate training gear and high-tech equipment.

"The facility is the first fire training academy in Iraq. In the past, training has taken place in Jordan and at other sites outside the country," said Wolfe. "The Iraqi Civil Defense Directorate (ICDD) now has the capacity to conduct high quality training right here. The academy will reduce expenses for ICDD and facilitate training for more firefighters."

According to Wolfe, the facility hosted its first HAZMAT training class in June and the first full firefighter training class is currently underway.

Joining Wolfe on the panel were James Santelle, DoJ/DoS Legal Attaché; Wilson Myers, Rule of Law Attorney, Baghdad PRT; and Dr. Tahseen Asheikly, MoD Baghdad Security Plan spokesman.

Courthouses and correction/detention facilities are also much in demand.

"To help facilitate 'Rule of Law', GRD has undertaken an ambitious courthouse construction program. More than 30 courthouse projects are complete and construction underway at sites in Al-Karkh, Rusafa, Basrah, Mosul and Hillah," said James Santelle, U.S. Department State Legal Attaché. "The ultimate goal of the courthouse program is to provide Iraq with a fully functional judicial system."

The additional capacity provided by these courthouses, witness protection safe houses, correctional/detainee facilities and secure document storage facilities was hammered home by Santelle who serves as the U.S. Embassy's liaison to GoI Minister of Justice officials.

"The added court rooms and related facilities are key components of the Iraqi judicial system and are responsible for increasing the efficiency of the judicial system. Providing safe, secure locations for Iraqi judges to administer justice is paying off," said Santelle. "Safe houses for judges and witness protection facilities are paying dividends to help GoI quickly adjudicate cases."

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